



TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

1701 North Congress Ave. ★ Austin, Texas 78701-1494 ★ 512/463-9734 ★ FAX: 512/463-9838 ★ <http://www.tea.state.tx.us>

August 19, 2003

Dear School Administrator:

Re: New vaccine requirements and health information

This is to inform you of important health and vaccine requirements impacting schools this year. The Texas Department of Health (TDH) can assist with implementing the new vaccine requirements and provide information, technical assistance, and training resources on the issues outlined in this letter.

Exemption from Vaccine Requirements

On June 10, 2003, Governor Perry signed HB 2292 that included language allowing an exemption to vaccine requirements for school admission for reasons of conscience, including religious beliefs. This vaccine exemption is effective on September 1, 2003. With many Texas schools beginning classes in August, however, many school administrators are unsure of how to interpret and implement this new conscientious exemption language.

Students enrolling prior to September 1, 2003 for the 2003-2004 school year are under current law that does not allow for a vaccine exemption for reasons of conscience. Students enrolling before September 1, 2003 can get a vaccine exemption for religious reasons. TEA policy requires school districts to provisionally enroll students for no more than thirty days, pending receipt of their immunization records. Schools provisionally enrolling students are required to have systems in place to readily identify these students after 30 days. At the end of the 30-day provisional enrollment period, students must have an official TDH affidavit form and/or an immunization record on file with the school in order to stay enrolled. Students who cannot produce either of these two documents should be excluded from attendance.

The official TDH affidavit form that parents must use to claim exemption from vaccine requirements is being developed by TDH but is not yet available. By law, this affidavit form has to be secure and not easily reproduced. Only the official TDH affidavit form is legally valid for the conscientious exemption for immunizations. School administrators should be aware that

bogus affidavits have been distributed and these should be disregarded. School administrators who receive any bogus affidavits should fax a copy to the TDH Bureau of Immunization and Pharmacy Support at 512/458-7544. Parents or guardians need to request affidavit forms in writing and include the child's name and date of birth. Written requests must be submitted through the U.S. Postal Service, commercial carrier or by hand-delivery to: ***TDH Bureau of Immunization and Pharmacy Support, 1100 W. 49th Street, Austin, Texas 78756.*** Attached is a list of Frequently Asked Questions to help you respond to inquiries about this new vaccine exemption.

Five Doses of DTaP Required for Certain Students

By the Governor's executive order, the Texas Board of Health approved, on August 7, 2003, emergency rules requiring an additional dose of diphtheria-tetanus-acellular pertussis (DTaP) vaccine for children 3 years and 4 years of age. Children 18 months through 3 years of age require 4 DTP/DT/DTaP doses, and children 4 years of age are required to have 5 doses. If the fourth DTaP dose was given on or after the 4th birthday, then a fifth dose is not necessary. Effective immediately, the DTaP requirement may apply to some pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students this school year. All public and private schools are expected to enforce this rule in addition to all other age-appropriate vaccine requirements. For more information about DTaP requirements or the conscientious exemption go to: www.ImmunizeTexas.com or contact Monica Gamez at (888) 963-7111 ext. 6470, monica.gamez@tdh.state.tx.us.

Local District Health Advisory Councils

SB 1357 revised Texas Education Code §28.004 and §38.013, which changed the name and broadened responsibilities of the local district health advisory council to include school health services; counseling and guidance services; a safe and healthy school environment; and school employee wellness. The school health advisory council (SHAC) could assist your district with implementation of new school health requirements and guidelines. This is especially important considering the legislative mandate within SB 19, 77th Legislature, which requires all elementary schools in Texas to implement a TEA-approved health program by September 2007. The purpose of the coordinated school health requirement is to provide school-based interventions aimed at reducing the risk factors associated with obesity and Type 2 diabetes. The required coordinated health program will focus on improving dietary and physical activity patterns of adolescents. For assistance, contact Anita Wheeler, R.N. at (888) 963-7111, ext. 2909, anita.wheeler@tdh.state.tx.us.

Students with Diabetes

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is mailing all school districts, *Helping the Student with Diabetes Succeed: A Guide for School Personnel*. TDH, along with the Texas Diabetes Council, is identifying methods to help schools review policies and develop personnel training via regional Education Service Centers and other resources. A link to the Guide and the American Diabetes Association's training package, *Diabetes Care Tasks at School: What Key Personnel Need to Know*, is at www.texasdiabetescouncil.org. For further assistance, contact

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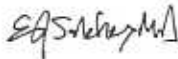
Kathleen King-Tryce, R.N. at (888) 963-7111, ext. 2610, kathleen.king-tryce@tdh.state.tx.us or
Michelle McComb, R.N. at (888) 963-7111, ext 3307, michelle.mccomb@tdh.state.tx.us.

Managing Wound Infections

TDH has school instructions on preventing and managing wound infections. It is important that schools understand this valuable information as the number of Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) cases in school settings has increased. MRSA is not currently a reportable condition; however, TDH's Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division provides consultation. For information on Staphylococcal Infections go to: www.tdh.state.tx.us/ideas/antibiotic_resistance/mrsa/school_athletic_departments.asp or contact Marilyn Felkner at (888) 963-7111, ext. 6393, marilyn.felkner@tdh.state.tx.us.

Our best wishes for a productive school year. Both TDH and TEA are available to assist you with information to create a safe, healthy educational environment for Texas schoolchildren.

Sincerely,



Eduardo J. Sanchez, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner of Health



Robert Scott
Chief Deputy Commissioner of Education

Attachment